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first sound of sympathy in Waitstill's voice, for self pity is very enfeebling. She fairly sobbed as she continued:

"So my only wedding journey was the freezing drive back from Allentown, with Ellen crying all the way and wishing that she hadn't gone with us. Mark and I both say we'll never be married again so long as we live."

"Where have you seen your husband from that day to this?"

"I haven't laid eyes on him," said Patty, with a fresh burst of woe. "I have a certificate thing and a wedding ring and a beautiful frock and hat that Mark bought in Boston, but no real husband. I'm no more married than ever I was. Don't you remember I said that Mark was sent away on Tuesday morning? And this is Thursday! I've had three letters from him, but I don't know till we see how father takes it when we can tell the Wilsons and start for Portsmouth."

"We shan't really call ourselves married till we get to Portsmouth. We promised each other that from the first. It isn't much like being a bride never to see your bridegroom; to have a father who will fly into a passion when he hears that you are married; not to know whether your new family will like or despise you and to have your only sister angered with you for the first time in her life."

Waitstill's heart melted, and she lifted Patty's tear stained face to hers and kissed it. "Well, dear, I would not have had you do this for the world, but it is done, and Mark seems to have been as wise as a man can be when he does an unwise thing. You are married, and you love each other. That's the comforting thing to me."

"We do," sobbed Patty. "No two people ever loved each other better than we, but it's been all spoiled for fear of father."

"I must say I dread to have him hear the news," and Waitstill knitted her brows anxiously. "I hope it may be soon, and I think I ought to be here when he is told. Mark will never understand or bear with him, and there may be trouble that I could avert."

"I'll be here, too, and I'm not afraid," and Patty raised her head defiantly. "Father can't unmarry us; that's why we acted in this miserable, secret, underhanded way. Somehow, though I haven't seen Mark since we went to Allentown, I am braver than I was last week, for now I've got somebody to take my part."

"I've a good mind to go upstairs and put on my gold beads and my wedding ring just to get used to them and to feel a little more married. No, I can't after all, for there is father driving up the hill now, and he may come into the house. What brings him home at this hour?"

"I was expecting him every moment," and Waitstill rose and stirred the fire. "He took the pump and went to the mills for grain."

"He hasn't anything in the back of the pump—and, oh, Waity, he is standing up now and whipping the horse with all his might. I never saw him drive like that before! What can be the matter? He can't have seen my wedding ring, and only three people in all the world know about my being married."

Waitstill turned from the window, her heart beating a little faster. "What three people, know three hundred are likely to know sooner or later. It may be a false alarm, but father is in a fury about something. He must not be told the news until he is in a better humor!"

### CHAPTER XXIV.

Patty Is Shown the Door.

**D**EACON BAXTER drove into the barn and, flinging a blanket over the wheezing horse, closed the door behind him and hurried into the house without even thinking to lay down his whip.

Opening the kitchen door and stopping outside long enough to kick the snow from his heavy boots, he strode into the kitchen and confronted the two girls. He looked at them sharply before he spoke, scanning their flushed faces and tear stained eyes; then he broke out savagely:

"Oh, you're both here; that's lucky. Now stand up and answer to me. What's this I hear at the Mills about Patience—common talk outside the store?"

The time had come, then, and by some strange fatality when Mark was too far away to be of service.

"Tell me what you heard, father, and I can give you a better answer," Patty replied, hedging to gain time and shaking inwardly.

"Bill Morrill says his brother that works in New Hampshire reports you as riding through the streets of Allentown last Monday with a young man."

There seemed but one reply to this, so Patty answered tremblingly: "He says what's true. I was there."

"What?" And it was plain from the deacon's voice that he had really disbelieved the rumor. A whirlwind of rage swept through him and shook him from head to foot.

"Do you mean to stan' there an' own up to me that you was thirty miles away from home with a young man?" he shouted.

along with you? I'll skin the hide off him, whoever it was!"

Patty remained mute at this threat, but Waitstill caught her hand and whispered: "Tell him all, dear. It's got to come out. Be brave, and I'll stand by you."

"Why are you interferin' and puttin' in your meddlesome oar?" the deacon said, turning to Waitstill. "The girl would never 'a' been there if you'd attended to your business. She's nothin' but a fool of a young filly, an' you're an old cart horse. It was your job to look out for her, as your mother told you to. Anybody might 'a' guessed she needed watchin'!"

"You shall not call my sister an old cart horse! I'll not permit it!" cried Patty, plucking up courage in her sister's defense and, as usual, comporting herself a trifle more like a spitfire than a true heroine of tragedy.

"Hush, Patty! Let him call me anything that he likes. It makes no difference at such a time."

"Waitstill knew nothing of my going away till this afternoon," continued Patty. "I kept it secret from her on purpose, because I was afraid she would not approve. I went with Mark Wilson, and—and I married him in New Hampshire because we couldn't do it at home without everybody's knowledge. Now you know all!"

"Do you mean to tell me you've gone an' married that reckless, worthless, horse trottin', card playin' sneak of a Wilson boy, that's courted every girl in town? Married the son of a man that has quarreled with me and insulted me in public? By the Lord Harry, I'll crack this whip over your shoulders once before I'm done with you! If I'd used it years ago you might have been an honest woman today instead of a—"

Foxwell Baxter had wholly lost control of himself, and the temper, that



"Put down that whip, father, or I'll take it from you!"

had never been governed or held in check, lashed itself into a fury that made him for the moment unaccountable for his words or actions.

Waitstill took a step forward in front of Patty. "Put down that whip, father, or I'll take it from you and break it across my knee!" Her eyes blazed and she held her head high. "You've made me do the work of a man, and, thank God, I've got the muscle of one. Don't lift a finger to Patty, or I'll defend her. I promise you! The dinner horn is in the side entry and two blasts will bring Uncle Bart up the hill, but I'd rather not call him unless you force me to."

The deacon's grasp on the whip relaxed, and he fell back a little in sheer astonishment at the bravado of the girl, ordinarily so quiet and self contained. He was speechless for a second and then recovered breath enough to shout to the terrified Patty: "I won't use the whip till I hear whether you've got any excuse for your scandalous behavior. Hear me tell you one thing. This little pleasure trip o' yours won't do you no good, for I'll break the marriage! I won't have a Wilson in my family if I have to empty a shotgun into him, but your lies and your low conduct are so beyond reason I can't believe my ears. What's your excuse, I say?"

"Stop a minute, Patty, before you answer, and let me say a few things that ought to have been said before now," interposed Waitstill. "If Patty has done wrong, father, you've no one but yourself to thank for it, and it's only by God's grace that nothing worse has happened to her. What could you expect from a young thing like that, with her merry heart turned into a lump in her breast every day by your cruelty? Did she deceive you? Well, you've made her afraid of you ever since she was a baby in the cradle, drawing the covers over her little head when she heard your step. What ever crop you sow is bound to come up, father; that's nature's law and God's as well."

"You hold your tongue, you, readin' the law to your elders an' betterers," said the old man, choking with wrath. "My business is with this worthless sister o' yours, not with you! You've

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Waitstill's heart melted, and she lifted Patty's tear stained face to hers and kissed it. "You shall not speak to me so!" she said indignantly, while keeping a discreet eye on the whip. "I'm not a caterpillar to be stepped on. I'm a married woman, as tight as a New Hampshire justice can make me, with a wedding ring and a certificate to show it need be. And you shall not call my husband names. Time will tell my husband's name. (Continued on page four.)

## The Story of Waitstill Baxter

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

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(Continued.)

"Turn your eyes to mine and believe in me, Waity, while I tell you everything, as I have so longed to do all these nights and days. Mark and I have loved each other for a long, long time. It was only play at first, but we were young and foolish and did not understand what was really happening between us."

"You are both of you only a few months older than when you were young and foolish," objected Waitstill.

"Yes, we are—years and years! Five weeks ago I promised Mark that I would marry him. But how was I ever to keep my word publicly? You have noticed how insultingly father treats him of late, passing him by without a word when he meets him in the street? You remember, too, that he has never gone to Lawyer Wilson for advice or put any business in his hands since spring?"

"The Wilsons are among father's aversions, that is all you can say. It is no use to try and explain them or rebel against them," Waitstill answered wearily.

"That is all very well and might be borne like many another cross, but I

wanted to marry this particular 'aversion,'" argued Patty. "Would you have helped me to marry Mark secretly if I had confided in you?"

"Never in the world—never!"

"I knew it," exclaimed Patty triumphantly. "We both said so! And what was Mark to do? He was more than willing to come up here and ask for me like a man, but he knew that he would be ordered off the premises as if he were a thief. That would have angered Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and made matters worse. We talked and talked until we were hoarse; we thought and thought until we nearly had brain fever from thinking, but there seemed to be no way but to take the bull by the horns."

"You are both so young you could well have bided awhile."

"We could have bided until we were gray. Nothing would have changed father, and just lately I couldn't make Mark bide," confessed Patty ingenuously.

"He has been in a rage about father's treatment of you and me. He knows we haven't the right food to eat, nothing fit to wear, and not an hour of peace or freedom. He has even heard the men at the store say that our very lives might be in danger if we crossed father's will or angered him beyond a certain point."

"You can't blame a man who loves a girl, if he wants to take her away from such a wretched life. His love would be good for nothing if he did not long to rescue her!"

"I would never have left you behind to bear your slavery alone, while I slipped away to happiness and comfort—not for any man alive would I have done it!" This speech, so unlike Waitstill in its ungenerous reproach, was repeated of as soon as it left her tongue. "Oh, I did not mean that, my darling!" she cried. "I would have welcomed any change for you and thanked God for it, if only it could have come honorably and aboveboard."

"But, don't you see, Waity, how my marriage helps everything? That is what makes me happiest; that now I shall have a home and it can be yours. Father has plenty of money and can get a housekeeper. He is only sixty-five, and as hale and hearty as a man can be. You have served your time, and surely you need not be his drudge for the rest of your life. Mark and I thought you would spend half the year with us."

Waitstill waived this point as too impossible for discussion. "When and where were you married, Patty?" she asked.

"In Allentown, N. H., last Monday, the day you and father went to Saco. Ellen went with us. You needn't suppose it was much fun for me! Girls that think running away to be married is nothing but a lark do not have to deceive a sister like you nor have a father such as mine to reckon with afterward."

"You thought of all that before, didn't you, child?"

"Nobody that hasn't already run away to be married once or twice could tell how it was going to feel. Never did I pass so unhappy a day. If Mark was not everything that is kind and gentle he would have tipped

me out of the sleigh into a snowbank and left me by the roadside to freeze."

"I might have been murdered instead of only married by the way I behaved, but Mark and Ellen understood. Then the very next day Mark's father sent him up to Bridgton on business, and he had to go to Allentown first to return a friend's horse, so he couldn't break the news to father at once, as he intended."

"Does a New Hampshire marriage hold good in Maine?" asked Waitstill, still intent on the bare facts at the bottom of the romance.

"Well, of course," stammered Patty, somewhat confused. "Maine has her own way of doing things and wouldn't be likely to fancy New Hampshire's. But nothing can make it wicked or anything but according to law."

"Besides, Mark considered all the dif-



"My poor, foolish dear!" sighed Waitstill.

genties. He is wonderfully clever, and he has a clerkship in a Portsmouth law office waiting for him, and that's where we are going to live, in New Hampshire, where we were married, and my darling sister will come soon and stay months and months with us."

"When is Mark coming back to arrange all this?"

"Late tonight or early tomorrow morning."

"Where did you go after you were married?"

"Where did I go?" echoed Patty in a childish burst of tears. "Where could I go? It took all day to be married—all day long, working and driving hard from sunrise to 7 o'clock in the evening. Then when we reached the bridge Mark dropped me, and I walked up home in the dark and went to bed without any supper for fear that you and father would come back and catch me at it and ask why I was so late."

"My poor, foolish dear!" sighed Waitstill.

Patty's tears flowed faster at the

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